

Sustainable Golden



Clayworks Citizen Comments Playbook - 260928

The background for Clayworks is followed by a playbook of comments that citizens can make if they want to see Clayworks constructed according to the original commitments of a sustainable, zero energy project.

Background

The presentation to the CSAB at the board meeting on 8/26/26 appears to be an effort to break the promises and commitments made by AC Development originally to get approval for the project. Now that they're well into the project, they're attempting to get approval for natural gas connections and usage in addition to the originally approved exceptions. The site was meant to keep Golden on track to meet 2050 zero energy goals, and set an example for other construction projects to follow. Our planet is spiraling towards disaster and at this point we need to change quickly. With 2050 only 24 years away, yet another exception to new installation of natural gas should not be worthy of discussion. Yet, here we are. The original approved project was designed for net-zero energy performance, LEED Gold, and fully electric. AC Development should stick with the plan and not renege on their sustainability commitments to the City of Golden and the planet we all share for a few unnecessary luxuries. These kinds of luxuries are a huge part of the reason we continue to kill our planet, even though we should know better. Let's please not do this in Golden. Let's be responsible to future generations.

AC is fulfilling their commitments on the design and construction process, doing a great job with LEEDS certifications with the building envelope, electricity, geothermal heating supplies, which will make the project outstanding with respect to GHG emissions, all-electric and PV-ready. Now is not the time to try and slip in unnecessary luxuries tied to natural gas that will be obsolete by definition in the next couple decades for two big reasons. First, continuing to burn it will make the global warming and associated fires, storms, floods and other disasters worse. This is why the City of Golden committed to net zero energy by 2050 in the first place. Second, fossil fuels are beginning to deplete, which will make production of natural gas more expensive and difficult, and will naturally lead to higher prices for consumers. The prices will increase gradually at first, and then suddenly it will be unaffordable if typical trends for depleting resources are followed, and there's little reason to think they won't. The best way forward is to stick with the original plan and commitments. To do the right thing. Let's bring this great project home in the right way.

Playbook

Here are some facts that you can draw from if you'd like to make a comment at an upcoming Planning Commission or City Council meeting.

1. Clayworks should keep their original commitments of zero energy. We only have about 20 years to rein in the environmental devastation on our planet, and now is not the time to grant exceptions for burning yet more natural gas on new construction.
2. Are you OK with or opposed to a pool and spas, when public facilities are available less than a mile away? These are the very sorts of unnecessary luxuries that are destroying our planet.
3. If pool and spas are approved, they should absolutely be heated with geothermal topped by heat pumps for net zero. AC stated that six geothermal wells would delay the project. That should be on them to decide whether they feel these facilities are worth delaying the project. If they wanted to avoid delays, why didn't they propose these facilities in the original bid?
4. The contractor has stated that heat pump technology is more expensive than natural gas. This may be true for the installation, but it's absolutely not the case for a long-term proper economic analysis, which would also include cost and carbon emissions of continued burning of natural gas as said gas becomes more expensive to produce and purchase, compared to renewable electricity, which is only purchased once, and is already more economical than fossil fuels.
5. Communal grills can be powered with propane, which doesn't require natural gas supply pipes or, better yet, with ethanol, which is renewable.
6. Natural gas is absolutely not required for pizza ovens. Blue pan makes excellent pizza with electricity, as do many other reputable chefs.
7. The contractor's argument for natural gas fireplaces is vague and subjective. Aesthetics has been cited at a recent CSAB meeting. So, how is aesthetics defined anyway? Seems like both natural gas and electric fireplaces look equally fake. The contractor failed to note important points about electric fireplaces compared to natural gas.
 - a. The analysis of gas vs electric fireplaces is incomplete. First, for an indoor gas fireplace, it would have to be vented, removing by definition a portion of heated air from inside the building, adding to heat demands, not necessary for an electric fireplace.
 - b. Second, they failed to mention that a natural gas fireplace emits more than 10 times more carbon (inside or outside) than an electric fireplace of comparable size.

8. For any analysis of construction and operating costs of natural gas amenities, to be complete, these should be compared with comparable renewable/electric amenities, and should not be limited to cost, but should also include long term (30 year) carbon emissions. These comparisons should be required by CSAB, Planning Commission, and City Council if the requested natural gas luxuries are considered for approval.
9. The contractors should not be allowed to use PV as justification to offset unnecessary natural gas. This is just another of the typical greenwashing excuses that are killing our planet.
10. We have to start thinking differently if we want to save our planet. Business as usual isn't going to do it. Gas is going to get harder to produce and extremely expensive in just the next couple decades, and there will be a point where it will be unaffordable. Why not stop burning it now, rather than later? Why warm our planet even more with business as usual? Let's set an example and drive this project home in the right way, and set an example for future projects. Let's make Clayworks a project that we can be proud of!
11. How do we want to be remembered by our descendants? As a proud community who ethically stood by our sustainable goals to save our planet, or just another community who looked the other way and perpetuated the destruction?
12. Let's bring this awesome project home in the right way! We'll set a great example for future projects and other cities to admire, and want to follow. Let's set a great trend that our planet and our descendants need for a joyful and fulfilling future in Golden and on planet Earth. A future we can be proud of and feel good about! We can do this!